

NEWS

DATE: July 10, 2006

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RABID BATS FOUND THROUGHOUT IDAHO

The Central District Health Department has been informed by the Department of Health and Welfare that four bats have tested positive for rabies in Idaho this year, all within the last 30 days. The bats were found in Challis, Salmon, Arco, and Weippe. Although the bats were found outside of the District's service area, the discoveries are significant and likely indicate the presence of bat rabies throughout the state. Persons enjoying outdoor activities should be aware of their surroundings and avoid contact with bats.

Rabies causes a fatal illness in humans, and wild and domestic animals, including dogs, cats, and horses. Between 1990 and 2001 there were 36 human cases of rabies in the United States; 27 (75%) of these were from bats. There were no human cases of rabies in Idaho during this period, in part due to proper medical management that includes timely administration of rabies vaccination and immune globulin to people exposed to rabid bats.

To protect yourself and your pets:

- Never touch bats. Be very suspicious of bat activity during daylight hours.
- If you or your child wakes up in the presence of a bat, discuss the situation with your medical provider. Seemingly insignificant exposures may have contributed to several fatal cases of rabies in the past.
- If you have an encounter with a bat, seek medical attention immediately. Save the bat in a container without touching the bat and contact your local district health department immediately for testing options.

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RABID BATS FOUND THROUGHOUT IDAHO – ADD ONE

- Bat-proof your home or cabin by checking chimneys, roof peaks, loose screening on louvers, dormer windows, or areas where flashing has pulled away from the roof or siding. Bats can enter through holes the size of a quarter. Typically bat-proofing is best after bats have migrated away in the fall.
- Always vaccinate your pets, including dogs, cats, horses, and ferrets. Pets may encounter bats in the out-of-doors or in the home. If your dog or cat brings a dead bat home, collect it in a plastic bag without touching it and call your district health department for possible testing. Also, contact your veterinarian to make sure your animal's rabies vaccinations are up-to-date.

For further information about rabies in your area, call your District Health Department. The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare website has Idaho-specific rabies information which can be accessed at <http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov/site/3399/default.aspx>. Information on rabies can also be found at the following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dvrd/rabies/

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